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SOURCE L'Echo d'Oran.

PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE PORT OF NEMOURS

[Comment: The increasing importance of the Algerian port of Nemours has enlivened interest in current plans for its development. The Oran daily newspaper L'Echo d'Oran, on 28 and 29 August 1952, discussed the present and potential activity of the port and gave some details of the plans for its alteration and enlargement. A summary of the articles follows.]

The proposal to expand the capacity of the port of Nemours was put forth at the North African Conference of 1928. It was formally adopted on 2 March 1931 by an interministerial commission, which entrusted the execution of the plan to Algeria and French Morocco, since the port would be used for exports from both of these countries.

By 1931, a decision had likewise been reached to construct a standard-gauge railroad from Zouj el Beghel to Nemours, a line which was supposed to be the foundation for the projected trans-Sahara railroad. The line, opened in 1936, started a flow of products toward Nemours which gave the port an ever-increasing importance. These products included lead from Touissit,alfa grass from the High Plateaus between Berguent and Bouarfa, manganese from Bouarfa, and live sheep from south of Oujda and the Guercif region.

By 1937, the exports shipped through Nemours amounted to 200,000 tons per year, as compared to 50,000 tons before the line was opened. With the exception of the war years, the port's commerce kept increasing since 1937, as shown by the following table:

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Export tonnage</u>	<u>No of Ships Cleared</u>
1937	200,000	--
1946	260,000	175
1947	315,000	180
1948	332,000	237
1949	442,000	377
1950	465,000	435
1951	675,000	--

Exports in 1951 included the following: 205,000 tons of anthracite from Djerada, 105,000 tons of coal from Kenadza, 90,000 tons of manganese, 49,000 tons of lead, 39,000 tons of zinc, 55,000 tons of clay, and 45,000 tons of alfa grass. (It should be noted that the exports of sheep through the port, which in 1939 amounted to 165,000 head, have since decreased sharply, owing to the droughts of 1945 - 1947.)

The mines of eastern Morocco are being fully developed. These include the lead mines of Boubeker and Toussib and the anthracite beds of Djerada (expected to yield 500,000 tons in 1952, 600,000 in 1953, and eventually, an annual output of one million tons). Alfa grass exports are increasing as a result of new cultivation being made possible by irrigation. The following two areas are to be irrigated in the near future: 12,000 hectares of the Marnia Plain in Algeria -- by means of the Beni Bahdel dam on the Tafna River; and 40,000 hectares of the Beni Snassene Basin -- by means of the waters of the Moulouya River, diverted at a point 80 kilometers from the mouth of the river. Nemours, as the nearest port, would be the natural outlet for the future products of these vast areas.

Perhaps closer in the future than is generally believed lies the possibility of an industrial combine to utilize the ore deposits known to exist in the south of the Department of Oran. Such an enterprise would have available the coal and water of that region. The mines there are getting more equipment and assurances of further assistance from the government (France and Algeria) for future operations. Again, Nemours would handle the exports from the region, via the Mediterranean-Niger railroad. Furthermore, with the extension southward of this railroad beyond its present terminus at Abadla and the subsequent facilitation of new mining and agricultural projects, their production would most easily be handled by Nemours.

Although Nemours is already one of the most important fishing ports in Algeria, its expansion as such is hampered by many factors. Insufficient berthing space; a limited water area, which leads to congestion of port traffic; not enough platform area for drying fish nets; and a lack of cold-storage facilities are some of the impediments to its expansion. At present, about 100 fishing boats use the port and bring in some 4 million kilograms of fish annually for immediate consumption or for processing in the port's 15 salting sheds and four canning factories. With improvements, the port could accommodate more ships and double the tonnage of fish caught, for the surrounding waters are well stocked.

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In the light of the preceding facts, it is not surprising to note the interest in this port that has been manifested for the past 20 years by those seeking to exploit the region around the Algerian-Moroccan border, especially by the French Moroccan government, because eastern Morocco is actually dependent on an enlargement of the port of Nemours. French Morocco has insistently demanded the equipment and expansion of the port of Nemours, even if it means paying the cost itself, and has even gone so far as to threaten to construct a port in Saidia. The latter alternative was imminent prior to 1931, at which time, France decided to begin the development of Nemours. This insistence was more successful recently when, in 1947, the Government General of Algeria drew up a preliminary plan for an initial stage of development, which, at French Morocco's demand, was intended to enlarge the port's export capacity to 750,000 tons a year. However, French Morocco objected to footing certain proposed expenditures, declaring that they were properly speaking in the nature of general public works. An agreement was reached in 1951, with the financing assured by France, Algeria, and French Morocco through a corporation comprising all the firms with a vital interest in the development of the port.

A total of 675,000 tons was exported through Nemours in 1951. Actually, the plan of development called for the handling of about 500,000 tons that year. Obviously, the additional traffic placed a strain on the port; the docking of ships and storage of merchandise were particularly difficult to manage. There are only eight ship's berths, at least five of which are usually busy handling ships one after another. The result is that the port's fishing boats have no definite place at which to dock, and their operating equipment, which is becoming more extensive, is laid out in such a way as to cause inconvenience. Thus, it is always hard for the larger ships, as well as for the fishing boats, to move about in the congested area. In addition, merchandise is stocked so inconveniently that it takes longer to handle, and the layovers are unnecessarily prolonged. This, in turn, results in higher docking charges and the departure of incompletely loaded vessels.

The trouble stems from the cramped conditions: the water area of 9-meter depth covers 12 hectares, 3 hectares of which are for berthing and the remainder for ship movements; the area of 4-meter depth is only 1½ hectares; the terrepleins bordering the deeper waters provide only 6 hectares for stocking of merchandise. It is evident that the port has reached its maximum capacity and cannot be expected to undertake an increase in traffic in its present status.

Studies indicate that the capacity can eventually be increased to 2,500,000 tons, provided that complete use is made of the bay. This could be made possible by diverting the Gazouanah River through the hill which dominates the area on the east. At present, however, the capacity can be doubled (raised to 1,500,000 tons) to meet the current needs simply by improving the port's facilities and by building a new basin. More extensive changes could always be made later on.

The current plan of construction takes these ideas into consideration and includes both altering the present facilities and extending the port westward. The following changes come under the heading of alterations in the present facilities: joining the breakwater with the headland; eliminating the North Jetty, its terreplein, and its projection into the small basin; lengthening the Central Pier; constructing a North Pier; and constructing a hauling slip. The cost of these changes is estimated at 1,500,000,000 francs.

The following changes come under the heading of extension of the port westward: lengthening the breakwater 250 meters westward, constructing a Jetty for [and projecting from] the breakwater, eliminating the present West Jetty and constructing a new one, widening the pier used for loading ore, constructing a new West Pier, and dredging to deepen the port to at least 12 meters. The cost of these projects is estimated at more than 2,500,000,000 francs.

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The execution of this plan will entail many difficulties at the start because of the present overtaxed condition of the port. To mitigate the problem, there have been attempts to improve the loading equipment; in particular, the Chamber of Commerce of Oran has been authorized to contract for a loan of 17 million francs to acquire two new petroleum-electric ~~and~~ diesel-electric cranes for the port of Nemours.

It is very likely, however, that the increase in traffic will always outstrip any improvements in the port's facilities. Nemours, the nearest port to the Sahara and the French Sudan, is destined to receive the agricultural products of the plains of Marnia and Berkane and the coal and ore of the Abadla-Colomb Bechar-Oujda axis. The vast economic potential of these regions along the Moroccan-Algerian border and the existence of roads and railroads to transport their products to Nemours make it imperative to enable the port to perform fully its role as their logical outlet.

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